

DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 455 184

SO 032 893

AUTHOR McKoski, David
TITLE Photomontage. Water in Africa.
INSTITUTION Peace Corps, Washington, DC. Office of World Wise Schools.
SPONS AGENCY Department of Education, Washington, DC.
PUB DATE 2000-00-00
NOTE 17p.; For related Water in Africa units, see SO 032 890-894.
AVAILABLE FROM Peace Corps, World Wise Schools, 1111 20th Street, NW, Washington, DC 20526. Tel: 800-424-8580 x1450 (Toll Free); Fax: 202-692-1421; e-mail: wwsinfo@peacecorps.gov. For Full Text: <http://www.peacecorps.gov/wws/water/africa/lessons/>.
PUB TYPE Guides - Classroom - Teacher (052)
EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Art Activities; *Critical Viewing; Curriculum Enrichment; Environmental Education; Foreign Countries; High Schools; Language Arts; National Standards; *Photographs; Social Studies; Visual Arts
IDENTIFIERS *Africa; *Environmental Problems; Peace Corps; United States; World Wise Schools

ABSTRACT

The Water in Africa Project was realized over a 2-year period by a team of Peace Corps volunteers. As part of an expanded, detailed design, resources were collected from over 90 volunteers serving in African countries, photos and stories were prepared, and standards-based learning units were created for K-12 students. This unit, "Photomontage," has students create a photomontage using essays and photographs provided by Peace Corps volunteers. The photomontage is calculated to focus attention on or alter viewers' attitudes regarding environmental issues in the United States and Africa. Students, while creating the photomontage, will challenge themselves to ask the question "What is this photograph about?" rather than "What do I see a photograph of?" Intended for use with high school students, the unit can be used in visual arts and language arts classes. Five to seven class periods of 45 minutes each are suggested. The unit lists materials needed, outlines applicable standards, provides essential questions, and gives student objectives. It details day-by-day procedures, assessment activities, and follow-up/enrichment activities. (BT)



Photomontage

David McKoski



<http://www.peacecorps.gov/www/water/africa/lessons/>

Peace Corps
 World Wise Schools
 1111 20th Street, N.W.
 Washington, D.C. 20526
 Telephone: (800) 424-8580 x1450
 Fax (202) 692-1421
 E-Mail: wwsinfo@peacecorps.gov

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Water in Africa is a project of Peace Corps World Wise Schools.

2000

Funded through a grant from the Department of Education, the Water in Africa project was realized over a two year period by a team of Peace Corps Volunteers, World Wise Schools' (WWS) classroom teachers, and WWS staff members. Inspired by an idea of one creative WWS teacher, the project eventually expanded into a detailed design. The development and implementation of the design included the collection of resources from over 90 Volunteers serving in African countries, the preparation of those photos and stories, and the creation of standards-based learning units for K-12 students.

Photomontage

Description:

How do we communicate the rich and complex visual world that is captured on a two-dimensional surface? In this lesson students will manipulate photographs by cutting, reassembling, and adding two-dimensional materials, such as text, maps, charts, documents, notes, and drawings. Using essays and photos provided by Peace Corps Volunteers, students will create a photomontage that is calculated to focus attention or alter viewers' attitudes regarding environmental issues in the United States and Africa. While creating the photomontage, students will challenge themselves to ask the question "What is the photograph about?" and not to ask the question "What do I see a photograph of?"

Timeframe: Five to seven 45-minute classes (Length of project depends upon complexity of photomontage)

Curricular Areas: Visual Arts, Language Arts

Grade Level: Grades 9-12 (May be adapted for upper elementary and middle school)

Materials

- Examining Photomontages
- Water: A Source of Life in Africa
- Water: A Source of Life in America
- Web of Comparison
- Photomontage Critique
- Evaluation of the Photomontage
- Magazines and books that contain photos relating to the topic
- Newspapers or other material that contains printed text
- Access to internet or copies of photos from Water in Africa Web site
<http://www.peacecorps.gov/www/water/africa/lessons/>
- Scissors
- Glue
- 12"x18" cardboard or heavy weight paper

Standards

Visual Arts Standard 1. Understands and applies media, techniques, and processes related to the visual arts.

Benchmark-- Understands how the communication of ideas relates to the media, techniques, and processes one uses

Visual Arts Standard 3. Knows a range of subject matter, symbols, and potential ideas in the visual arts.

Benchmark-- Applies various subjects, symbols, and ideas in one's artworks

Visual Arts Standard 5. Understands the characteristics and merits of one's own artwork and the artwork of others.

Benchmark-- Understands how various interpretations can be used to understand and evaluate works of visual art

Language Arts Standard 4. Gathers and uses information for research purposes.

Benchmark-- Synthesizes a variety of types of visual information, including pictures and symbols, for research topics.

Benchmark-- Considers the motives, credibility, and perspectives of the authors of primary sources.

Essential Questions

How can a photograph distort reality?

How is art used to influence the thoughts and beliefs of people?

Objectives

Students will:

- Compare and contrast how water is used in their life and the lives of Africans.
- Find one comparison or contrast and develop a question which the photomontage will address.
- Present visual data calculated to alter viewers' attitudes.

Procedure

Procedure Homework Before the Unit Begins

A day or two before introducing the lesson have each student bring in one photograph from home.

Procedure Day One:

1. Introduce the lesson with comments similar to these: We are trained from an early age that when we look at a photograph we must see something -- a best friend, a new car, a summer vacation. Since birth we have looked at thousands of photographs from magazines, family photo albums, newspapers, or CD covers and as we look we constantly ask ourselves "What do I see?" Do you ever stop and ask yourself while you're

looking at a photograph, "What do I feel?" or "What is it about?"

2. Write the phrase "One picture is worth a thousand words" on the board and have students respond to the phrase.
3. Have students describe their photograph. The description should answer the following questions:
 - What is happening in the photograph?
 - What was happening before the photograph was taken?
 - What happened after the photograph was taken?
 - What were the people in the photograph feeling and thinking at the time?
 - Why was the photograph taken?
 - What title would you give your photograph?
4. Place students in pairs and have them exchange photographs. Instruct each student to look at their partner's photograph and share their responses to the following questions:
 - What is happening in the photograph?
 - What was happening before the photograph was taken?
 - What happened after the photograph was taken?
 - What were the people feeling and thinking at the time?
 - Why was the photograph taken?
 - What title would you give the photograph?
5. After students have shared their responses tell them to write descriptions of their partner's photo. Have them exchange written descriptions with their partner and discuss any misunderstandings between what the viewer observed in the photograph and what actually occurred. Have students share their discussions with the whole class.
6. During the discussion, bring up the following questions:
 - Is the photo telling the truth?
 - Is the photo telling the full story?
 - Is the photo manipulating or limiting the true story of someone's life or an event?
 - Can a single two-dimensional image communicate an entire story?
 - What are the limitations to photographs?
 - Why did misunderstandings occur while viewing the photographs?
7. Homework: Have students respond to the essential question: How can a photograph distort reality?

Procedure Day Two:

1. Ask students to share and support their responses to the homework question. Record their responses on the board.

2. Introduce students to the definition of photomontage, i.e., the manipulation of photographs by cutting and reassembling them and adding two-dimensional materials: text, maps, charts, documents, notes, and drawings as a way to enhance or alter reality.
3. Show students three examples of photomontages. Provide these as handouts or project them on overhead transparencies. Examples can be found from the resources listed at the end of the lesson plan.
4. Tell students that while they are viewing a variety of photomontages they should respond to the following questions from the handout Examining Photomontages. (PDF or RTF) What images do you see? (photos, drawings, text, color) What is the work trying to communicate? Does a photomontage improve a viewers understanding of a subject? Explain your answer.
5. Ask students to share their responses with the class.
6. For homework have students respond to the essential question: How is the art form of photomontage used to influence the thoughts and beliefs of people?

Procedure Day Three/Four:

1. Ask students to share their responses to the homework question and discuss any differences of opinion.
2. Inform students that they will research information from contemporary photographs and text about the specific issue of water and how water influences the daily lives of people in Africa and the United States. As artists they will take this information and transform the photographs and text into photomontages.
3. Introduce students to the Water in Africa Web site. If internet is not available to students, provide them with printed copies of materials from selected countries from the web site. You may want to concentrate on a specific country or region, or select countries from various regions of Africa.
4. Using the photos and essays provided in the Water in Africa have students begin to collect information to use in their photomontage. Students may select one country or several countries from a specific region.
5. Tell students to complete the country specific handout Water: A Source Of Life In Africa while searching the site. The questions on the worksheet will help students understand the use of water in the daily lives of Africans.
6. Homework: Students complete handout Water: A Source Of Life in America. These questions will help students understand the use of water in their own daily life.

Procedure Day Five:

1. Give students the Web of Comparison (PDF or RTF) chart. Tell them to use the chart to compare the responses to the questions they answered on the two worksheets, Water, a Source of Life. They should look for the similarities and differences between their own culture in the United States and their chosen African country.
2. After completing the Web of Comparison chart students use this information to develop a concluding statement or question regarding water. The concluding statement/question will be the topic that their photomontage will address. For example, a statement might be "Water influences our daily activities" and a question might be "Is water a valuable resource to you?"
3. After writing their concluding statement or question, tell students to return to the Water in Africa Web site and begin collecting photos and text that will be used to support their concluding statement/question. If students do not have access to the internet or printing provide them with a selection of photos taken from the Web site. (If students are printing from the web site you might want to limit the number of photos they are allowed in order to reduce excessive printing.) Photos and text may also be selected from other resources.
4. The photomontage may be enhanced by using maps, phrases, single words, questions, color, parts of a photograph or the entire photograph. Ask the students what words or graphics could be used to help communicate the message more clearly. If a student uses the concluding statement "Water influences our daily lives," the pictures and text must support the statement. The student will want to collect photos that show how water is used in different activities both in Africa and the United States. The photomontage could contrast differences or show similarities.

Procedure Day Six and until completed:

1. Monitor students as they continue to collect relevant photographs, text, and graphics.
2. After students have collected materials they are ready to begin to design a layout for the photomontage. Tell them that materials can be placed anywhere on the paper, but remind them that the photomontage is one composition and not a selection independent photos. Everything should connect and have a reason for being included. Irrelevant materials will distract from the message.
3. Continue to ask students the following questions throughout the process of creating the photomontage:
 - "One picture is worth a thousand words"- what is your picture communicating?
 - What is your concluding statement/question?
 - What is happening in the photomontage?
 - What title would you give your photomontage? Does this title support your concluding statement/question?

- What are the relationships between the photos and words that you are using?
 - What do you want your viewer to see and feel when they look at the photomontage?
4. Have students glue their photos and text to heavy weight paper or cardboard. After the materials have been attached to the surface tell them to evaluate their composition. Have them ask themselves:
 - Is the composition complete?
 - Do the photos and text support the message?
 - Is something missing?
 - What is needed to complete the composition?
 5. At this point students may attach additional resources or complete the composition by drawing or adding color into the work.

Assessment

1. Have the students critique the artwork by writing about the content of a classmate's photomontage by following these steps:
 - Tell students to exchange photomontages.
 - Have each student critique the photomontage of a partner and completes the critique chart
2. Instruct students to return the critique sheets to the student who created the work of art. Direct each student to read the critique of his/her photomontage. As a class have students discuss how they feel about the critique they received. Ask the students:
 - Was your message communicated to the viewer?
 - If not, what prevented the viewer from understanding your message?
 - Would you change something in the photomontage?
3. Use the Evaluation Rubric to evaluate work of individual students.

Follow-up/Enrichment Activities

Hang the photomontages in a prominent place in the school. Set up a way that viewers can write comments about the works of art that will go to the artist.

Additional Resources

Books:

Ades , Dawn. "Photomontage." London: Thames and Hudson Ltd., 1976.
 Lavin, Maud and Hannah Hoch. "Cut with the Kitchen Knife." New Haven: Yale University

Press, 1993.

Artists:

Alan Sonfist
David Medalia

Web links:

<http://www.collageart.org/links/>
<http://www.collageart.org/books/>
www.artsnet.getty.edu/ArtsEdNet/Resources/Ecology/Earth/terms.html

About the Author

David McKoski is teaches Art and Chinese at Roberto Clemente Community Academy in Chicago. He served as a Peace Corps Volunteer in the Philippines from 1985-87 and is a Peace Corps Fellows graduate from DePaul University's Urban Teacher Corps. After piloting this unit in his own classroom, he commented: "This lesson is complex and it requires students to read and collect information, compare and contrast, and really think about what they are putting on paper. Once again, I wanted my students to understand how contemporary works of art are created. They need to understand that art also requires research. Although the lesson concentrated on the visual arts I think students used skills that cross over into other areas. Hopefully the next time they look at photos they will take a closer look at the message as well as the content."

Examining Photomontages

	Example One	Example Two	Example Three
1. What images do you see?			
2. What is the work trying to communicate?			
3. Does the photomontage improve the viewer's understanding of the subject? Explain your answer.			

Define photomontage:

Water: A Source of Life in Africa

Name _____

Country _____

1. Make a list of the daily activities which include the use of water.

2. What does water symbolize?

3. How much water does an individual use on a daily basis?

4. Where do the people get their water?

5. How much time does it take each day to collect water?

6. Do the people conserve water? Why or why not?

7. Include additional information that you find interesting.

Water: A Source of Life in North America

Name _____ Country _____

1. Make a list of your daily activities that include the use of water.

2. What does water symbolize in your culture?

3. How much water do you think you use daily?

4. Where do you get your water?

5. How much time does it take you each day to collect water?

6. Do you conserve water? Why or why not?

7. Include additional information that you think is interesting.

Web of Comparison

Africa	Similarities	North America

Conclusions:

Photomontage Critique

Reviewer _____

This photomontage was created by _____

1. What is your first response to this artwork?

2. List the images that you see. Read the text. What words seem particularly significant?
What colors, values, shapes or other visual phenomenon dominate the art?
What is the focal point of the work?

3. How do the images and text work together?

4. Have you noticed new images or connections as you studied the work?
Have your perceptions or feelings about the work changed as you look at it?

5. What is the work communicating?

Evaluation of the Photomontage

Student Name: _____

Photomontage Title : _____

Area	Points	Descriptors
Content Accuracy	/100	The Student: • chose content that was relevant to objective and presented the content accurately. • referred to at least four resources to support the information in the end product.
Content Depth	/100	The Student: • expressed content through non-literal representation. • expressed content through text. • was able to compare and contrast collected information.
Process	/100	The Student: • integrated information from essays and photos. • accurately completed charts.
Presentation and Neatness	/100	The Student: • planned layout of photomontage. • executed layout in a manner that complemented the message of the photomontage.
Creativity	/100	The Student: • Created original photomontage using three or more two-dimensional materials.
Total	/100	

Comments: